



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# WORSHIP AND THE REUNION OF CHRISTENDOM

---

BERNARD IDDINGS BELL

Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

---

*Discussions of Christian unity sometimes assume certain attitudes which are themselves open to question. DEAN BELL here frankly handles one of these presuppositions—namely, that all churches have the same conceptions of the means of grace. It is obvious on which side of the discussion his sympathies lie, but for that very reason we would particularly recommend his paper. His views are those of a very influential body of men in religious life and must be given weight in all discussions of church unity.*

One of the things about which many people rightly longing for the reunion of a divided Christendom make their gravest mistake is to suppose that the differences between the various communions are entirely, or chiefly, differences of polity. The main difference is one much more fundamental and therefore less easily removed than that. What it is can easily be seen by anyone who examines comparatively the worship of that group of communions called Catholic and that group called Protestant. It will be found that the essential dissimilarity of the two is due to the fact that the worship of the latter is introspective or subjective while that of the former is sacramental and objective. From this observation one may deduce what it is that really divides Christendom. The division is really in theology. There are in Christian communions today two quite fundamentally variant ideas about God and his relations with mankind. The two are apart philosophically. A true Catholic and an informed Protestant ought to hope to belong to one church as little as an anarchist and a communist ought to hope to belong to

one political party. These latter two persons differ on the very thing that determines a political party, namely, its idea of the state and its relations to individuals. The Catholic and Protestant are at odds about the very thing that determines a religion, namely, its idea of God and his relationship to his worshipers. If one really desires to appreciate the difficulties in the way of reunion, except through conversion of one into the other, between the two great camps of occidental Christendom, he has only to make a tour of the churches and see the variant things, the one sort introspective, the other sort sacramental, which are called by the one name, "worship."

The Protestant churches have pre-vaillingly a type of service the center of which is a God not definitely located anywhere in the material world. An examination made by the writer of the religious convictions of a number of Protestants of various communions—Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, Unitarians, Christian Scientists, Baptists, and Disciples—has convinced him that this type should be further divided into

two subtypes. Quite often the subtypes have each been found in members of the same religious body.

In the first of these subtypes each worshiper imaginatively localizes a really unlocalized God for the purposes of his own worship. He pictures the Deity as "a good old man," or as "a very strong, athletic man," or as "one with a long white beard," or as "a loving face like Hofman painted," or something of that sort, located sometimes immediately above the prayer, sometimes by his side, very often "away up in the center of the heavens, on a throne surrounded by angels"—at any rate somewhere arbitrarily fixed by the action of the worshiper's imagination.

The second subtype is more rare. Most Protestants, like other people, find it necessary to localize their God. Sometimes people have done this in sticks, stones, likenesses, and graven images. It is, of course, only a trifle less childish to locate him in an imagined spot and form. Yet most Protestants feel constrained to do so. In this second type the remembrance that "God is a Spirit" leads the worshipers to conceive of him as "a mystic, ghostly aura" permeating all things—as "a beneficent, impersonal influence," as "an urge toward good," as "a breathing-forth of love." This subtype is oriental, exotic to our Western minds. It is to be found in the various "New Thought" cults. It reached its highest perfection among the Quakers.

Neither subtype produces, or can produce, anything that may rightly be called an "art" of worship, if by "art" one means the use of physical media to express spiritual ideas.

Consider from this point of view the first subtype. In the first place, there can be no artist unit larger than the individual. Obviously no group of people can use in common any physical means wherewith to express their devotion to Deity if each of them pictures that Deity as located in a different place—even if only imaginatively located—and as being of a different size, shape, and general appearance. A congregation of people of this type when they seek to worship together can have no common center of unity, no objective which they may share. Their worship, if they attempted to use physical media to express themselves, would be of anarchic "composition." It would jar as badly as a musical discord. It would be spiritual pandemonium. Instinctively Protestants of this type recognize this fact and make no attempt to use any such material media, with the exception of the use of hymn-singing, and even this tends with every passing year to become less and less addressed to Deity in a spirit of worship.

Moreover, the common tendency of Protestants of this subtype to place their Deity far off, above and beyond them, is likely to cause them to minimize the desire to express devotion physically. They feel no great propulsion toward doing what they surely would do were they convinced that they were in the very *intimate and immediate* presence of God. One finds in their services an almost complete absence of acts of obeisance—bowings, kneelings, prostrations, beating upon the breast—an absence of all that instinctive pagantry which men have ever exhibited when in the presence of those recognized as

infinitely superior in power or in goodness or in both. This is natural. It is hard to show or indeed to feel very vividly the presence of anyone who is thought of as at any considerable spatial distance. Consider how differently we behave when our wife is away visiting and when she is at home. No levity is intended. There is a great difference between our feelings, in respect to their vividness, when we write, "Dear, I love you very much," and when we say the same thing to her face to face. It is equally difficult to feel very vividly the presence of a God conceived of as miles on miles away and very busy with other folk than us.

Or take the other Protestant conception, the rarer one, of God as an all-enveloping aura, disembodied even in the imagination. If that is indeed what a man's God is, he is put to the necessity of attempting to communicate with his Deity in a way utterly different from that in which he communicates with any other human being. I am not a disembodied aura. Neither is my friend. I communicate with him and he communicates with me through physical intermedia. If he were disembodied, one of two things would be necessary that we might converse. Either I should have to get out of my body, or try to, or else he would have to get himself into one. No person to whom God is a disembodied aura is willing to admit that God would, even if he could, get into a body. Therefore he, the worshiper, tries his level best to get out of his body. He seeks to forget that he has one, to eliminate it from his attention, even to deny its existence, and he concentrates upon the effort to become *en rapport* with Deity by a sort of self-hypnosis into disembodiment. Of

course he feels no desire to use physical expressions of devotion. Indeed, they are positive hindrances to him in what he feels it necessary to do.

For perfectly legitimate reasons, among Protestants worship has become increasingly a lost art. Of course there are many beautiful and artistic things in Protestant churches and in connection with Protestant services. Only the Quakers ever had the willingness to carry their principles of worship to their logical end and eliminate physical beauty altogether in the effort to gain the attunement of pure spirits with God. There is much among the rest of us, no matter what our theories, which rebels against lack of beauty in religion. Protestants are given to adorning their churches with stained glass and fine paintings and carved wood and exquisite color combinations, to building great organs, to hiring expensive singers. But the present writer has a feeling—he has talked with a number of intelligent Protestants who were willing to admit it—that for the most part in Protestant churches these adornments are accompaniments to worship, additions to it—often, indeed, hindrances to it—rather than necessary media for expressing it. The finer the artistic surroundings the more this is likely to be felt. A gentleman expressed what many have felt, when he said, after visiting Chicago's finest Gothic church—a building belonging to a Protestant congregation—"All through the service I felt that same feeling I felt once in a great Eastern mosque that once had been a Christian basilica—that while the worship was sincere, and the place was beautiful, they didn't fit one another very well."

The attitudes of Protestantism toward worship, which so far we have been examining, are, it must be confessed even by the most ardent Protestant, utterly at variance with those at the bottom of all other religions of the earth. In almost all these others God is conceived of as a spiritual being who for the sake of communing with men takes upon himself limitations and dwells in some physical thing. It is by no means to be assumed offhand that even the most simple-minded savage thinks his idol is the exclusive abode of his deity. It is to him, rather, the place where the deity dwells in his relationships to those who worship him. Every pagan religion, of simple form or emerged development, utters what seems to be a natural human conviction—namely, that the Spirit must be incarnate in matter before it can be comprehended or worshiped. This is true even of Mohammedanism, which theoretically rejects this next to universal religious idea, but finds it necessary in practice to adopt it by worshiping toward a particular spot, the sacred city of Mecca. With this generally accepted idea Protestantism disagrees.

Catholicism, on the other hand, does not disagree with it. Catholicism is a form of Christianity—and we ought not to forget that in the days of Christian-

ity's greatest achievement it was the only form of Christianity there was—which maintains that Jesus in his one prescribed act of worship, the Lord's Supper, recognized this instinctive religious feeling of mankind. Catholics believe that when Jesus took bread and broke it, and took the wine and passed it, and said, "This is my body," "This is my blood," he meant to furnish his followers forever with concrete media in which he might dwell among them—a home, if you will, in which he might in all ages touch and be touched. So far as our human relationships are concerned, our bodies are the media wherewith our souls make themselves known to one another. So, says Catholicism, in religion—the essential feature of which is communion of God's spirit and our spirit—the bread and wine are Christ's body and the blood which vivifies that body, by his own divine appointment, and we, touching them in a natural, human way, touch him.<sup>1</sup>

Because the Catholic believes this, his worship is utterly different from Protestant worship. His God has a concrete, definite, physical place of abode, for the purpose of meeting his devotees—the consecrated elements upon the altar. The Catholic worships God there. The presence is felt to be very real, truly

<sup>1</sup> It may be well to state that the writer has found that the following communions may be said, from this point of view, to be Catholics, that is, to have definitely the sacramental idea, variously defined and explained but still firmly held: the Greek Orthodox church, the Roman Catholic church, the Church of England with its American sister the Protestant Episcopal church, the Lutheran bodies, and certain what may be called "High Church Presbyterians." These all believe in the real presence of Jesus in the sacrament. It seems to the writer quite within the bounds of possibility that the differences in polity between these may be harmonized eventually, and that there may be union between them.

It ought further to be understood that no intelligent Catholic believes that this presence is a carnal or fleshly thing, suggestive of cannibalism, and that no intelligent Protestant imagines for a moment that he does.

concrete. And because the Catholic feels very vividly that he is for the time being in the innermost and uttermost Presence, in the very throne-room, of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, he betakes himself naturally to all sorts of physical expression of what is at once his obedience and his love. Architectural glories, beauties of paint on canvas, harmonies of sound, sweetnesses of smell, sweeping pageantries—these he uses, not as accompaniments of worship, but as physical things gladly seized upon and offered to a God who has limited himself to meet man's physical limitations. Furthermore, to every worshiper present God is localized in the same place. This enables them all to unite, as a social unit, in the oblation through things physical of desires and intentions spiritual.

The appeal of Protestantism, as shown by its worship, is to the soul apart from the body. The appeal of Catholicism is to the entire human being, accepting him for what he ordinarily seems to be, a complex of soul and body. To a Protestant, it is plain from his devotions, the incarnation is something which began, continued, and for every practi-

cal purpose ended, a great many centuries ago, in the Holy Land. It may continue now in heaven; but it is over so far as the earth is concerned. To the Catholic, as is evident to anyone who observes the celebration of a mass, God is still incarnate on earth, and the God-man, Jesus, is physically present on the earth today, dwelling now in a body of bread as really as he once dwelt in a body of flesh. The God of Protestantism is not at present mundanely incarnate; the God of Catholicism is mundanely incarnate even now, in 1917.

Which of these beliefs is right and which wrong, which true and which false, which the better and which the worse, is not pertinent to this present paper. The one point stressed here is that the essential issue between the Catholic group of Christian communions and the Protestant group is not a question of polity at all, but a question of theology, and very fundamental theology at that, an issue that will appear with great plainness to anyone who is willing to compare what Catholics call worship with what Protestants call by the same religious name.